

Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings Montgomery
County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Md. 20850

March 5, 2026

Re: Holton Arms Expansion Proposal

Dear Hearing Examiner,

We are long time residents (38 years) of the Al-Marah community, and we have urgent concerns about the proposed expansion by the Holton-Arms School. Our community, which is located just inside the 495 beltway and River Road, is directly across from Holton Arms and historically deals with major traffic from the nearby Primary Day School and Holton. The proposed plans would significantly worsen an already grave situation for our neighborhood.

Our community relies on just two access points from River Road: Burdette Road and Royal Dominion Drive. Both of these entrances are directly in the path of Holton-Arms traffic, and the current volume already causes significant congestion. We are particularly concerned about the school's plan under CBA-1174-E, which would dramatically increase enrollment and allow for large-scale facility rentals. Even the school's own traffic consultant admitted these changes would result in hundreds of more cars coming through River Road causing worse congestion than before.

A further concern is the significant "cut-through" traffic we experience as Holton-Arms families and staff use our neighborhood to avoid congestion on River Road. The school's proposed expansion offers no realistic solution to this problem. In fact, their primary suggestion to build a dedicated left-turn lane

at the Royal Dominion Drive exit would only encourage more of this dangerous and disruptive behavior. This "solution" does nothing to address our concerns and would only allow the school to encourage more drivers to use Al-Marah as a bypass rather than use River Road. This plan would exacerbate safety hazards for our residents, including children and elderly walkers, and would limit our own access to our homes. Additionally, the school's planning information includes renting out facilities when school is not in session, further congesting a stretch of River Road that is already heavily impacted by traffic.

The proposition of overflow parking at the Primary Day School with the utilization of shuttle buses to commute between schools further escalates the already colossal volume of traffic that exists.

We are disappointed that the school has been unwilling to consider proven traffic mitigation strategies, such as mandatory busing and carpooling. Instead, their plan relies solely on education and monetary incentives, strategies that school representatives themselves have conceded might not be effective and would require a significant amount of time to implement. Other local private schools, like The McLean School, The Potomac School, and Georgetown Day School, have successfully implemented mandatory busing. Holton-Arms also has a second entrance on Burdette, but the school was unwilling to consider having traffic use this alternate path. They also refused to discuss expanding the lanes within their main entrance to better manage traffic. Holton Arms concern for their increased student body and revenue should not override our community's safety and traffic concerns.

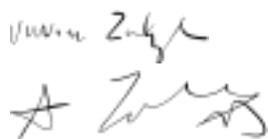
We stand vehemently against Holton Arms proposition to construct a dedicated left hand turn lane on the Al Marah side of Royal Dominion Drive. This would encourage increased number of Holton commuters to cut through and utilize our neighborhood as an access ramp into the school. This would increase an

already immense traffic problem and safety concern for our community.

From a neighborhood standpoint, increasing through traffic at our Royal Dominion Drive exit would make it far more difficult for residents to get to work or appointments. We would be blocked in by Holton-Arms cars trying to cross River Road, a problem that many of us have experienced for many years.

In conclusion, we urge you to oppose this expansion. We do NOT want Holton-Arms to expand, and we do NOT want a dedicated left-turn lane on Royal Dominion Drive. The school should be required to implement crucial safety measures, such as mandatory busing, and to fund license plate monitors and street signs to enforce a rule that no Holton-Arms cars can use Al-Marah as a cut-through. We hope you will make just and sincere recommendations to help protect our safety and access to our homes and community.

Thank you for your attention,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The top signature is 'Vivian Zalzal' and the bottom signature is 'George Zalzal'. Both are written in dark ink on a white background.

George and Vivian Zalzal